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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1207
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000653

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NEA FOR IPA AND FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/15/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [ELAB](#)
SUBJECT: ABBAS CHAIRS PA'S WEEKLY CABINET MEETING IN PUBLIC
SHOW OF SUPPORT FOR FAYYAD

REF: A. JERUSALEM 628

[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 615

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) chaired the PA's weekly Cabinet session April 14 in a public show of support for PM Salam Fayyad's government. Local press gave the Cabinet session favorable coverage emphasizing the theme of Palestinian unity. End summary.

Abbas Chairs Cabinet Session, Expresses
"Full Confidence" in Fayyad Government

[1](#)2. (U) President Abbas chaired the April 14 Cabinet session in Ramallah in a move he and Cabinet officials said demonstrated the President's "full support for and confidence in PM Fayyad's government." Local press and Cabinet contacts report that Abbas said "This is my Cabinet and I support it," and praised the Cabinet's achievements in its nine-month tenure. Press quoted Information Minister Riyadh Maliki as saying President Abbas recalled similar difficulties and internal pressure when he was Prime Minister in 2003, and asked Cabinet Ministers to disregard outside criticism from "various quarters."

[1](#)3. (U) Also April 14, Abbas and Fayyad presided over a public signing ceremony for an OPIC-backed mortgage financing facility. The ceremony and Cabinet session were the first public appearance by Fayyad and Abbas together in several months, and received widespread and favorable television and front-page newspaper coverage emphasizing the theme of Palestinian unity.

Fayyad Pressed Abbas to Ease Fatah
Interference, Public Sector Strike

[1](#)4. (C) According to President's Office and PA Ministerial contacts, Abbas' decision to attend the April 14 session followed his meeting with PM Fayyad on April 12, in which Fayyad sought the President's support in the face of Fatah efforts to undermine the government, encourage the PA unions to strike and press for a Cabinet reshuffle. Fayyad reportedly complained specifically about PLC Fatah bloc leader Azzam al-Ahmad, General Intelligence chief Tawfiq Tirawi, and the Fatah-connected labor leaders who called for strikes in defiance of a PA High Court injunction (ref A). President's Office contacts say Abbas, who had intervened to tone down the confrontation between the unions and the government, took Fayyad's grievances seriously and decided to attend the Cabinet session and exercise leverage with Fatah leaders to ease pressure on the government.

